

# North East Public Health Alliance

February 12th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

11:00 am - 1:00 pm EST

Hybrid Meeting

In-Person: Tewksbury Board of Health

Virtual: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83076775349?jst=2>

## **Voting members in attendance:**

Kristel Bennett, Billerica

Donna Greenwood, Chelmsford

Siobhan LaFreniere, Tewksbury

Kerri Oun, Tyngsborough

## **Non-voting members in attendance:**

Shelagh Collins, Billerica

Manizeh Afridi, BME Strategies

Darcy Beall, Chelmsford (Virtual)

Taryn Angel, Chelmsford (Virtual)

Bethany Slack, Regional Public Health Specialist

Ashley Pavlakos, Regional Public Health Nurse

## **Voting members absent:**

Shannon Gillis, Tewksbury

## **I. Opening**

4/4 voting members present, quorum was met.

### **Motion to start the meeting**

Donna Greenwood made a motion to start the meeting. Kerri Oun seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

Manizeh Afridi called the meeting to order at 11:05AM.

## **II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**Motion to approve January meeting minutes**

Donna Greenwood motioned to approve January meeting minutes. Kristel Bennett seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

**December meeting minutes will be up for approval again at the next meeting.**

### III. Announcements

#### A. FY26 SAPHE 2.0 Reporting for Local Public Health

##### SAPHE 2.0 Reporting Overview

- Why SAPHE 2.0 Reporting Matters:
  - Annual reporting is required under SAPHE 2.0
  - The data collected will allow ongoing monitoring to improve understanding of local public health capacity
  - The annual data collection process will provide a consistent, standardized, and integrated reporting system
  - The reporting surveys and results have been designed to support system improvement
- What is planned for 2026 SAPHE 2.0 reporting?
  - 1) Workforce Standards Survey: Every local public health staff person, contractor, and LBOH completes a survey to report on role and training
  - 2) Performance Standards Survey: Every municipality completes a survey to report on capacity to meet the [Massachusetts Performance Standards for Local Public Health](#)
- FY26 SAPHE 2.0 Reporting Timeline:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completed by every local public health staff person, ISD, contractor and LBOH</li><li>• Collects information about the expertise and responsibilities of the local public health workforce</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completed by every local public health entity</li><li>• Typically led by the Health Director with support from the Board of Health, Inspectional Services, etc.</li><li>• Collects current local capacity to meet Performance Standards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Survey results will be used to identify and report statewide training and resource needs</li><li>• Workforce survey collects aggregate results at regional or statewide-level; individual &amp; municipal level results will not be available to protect anonymity</li></ul>
<b>Workforce Standards Survey</b> Winter 2026	<b>Performance Standards Survey</b> Early Spring 2026	<b>Data Analysis</b> Spring 2026

**By completing both surveys, LPH can meet SAPHE 2.0 reporting requirements.**

## Workforce Standards Survey

- Background:
  - The Workforce Survey assesses the resources needed for the MA LPH workforce to achieve the standards from the Blueprint for Public Health Excellence.
  - Every local public health staff person, contractor, and LBOH completes a survey.
  - This **anonymous** survey will include:
    - Workforce job categories, titles, and job functions performed
    - Workforce standards: education, certifications and licensures, trainings completing, and future training needs
    - Workforce composition: job experience, areas of expertise, demographic information
- Timeline:
  - The survey will be launched during the week of February 23rd
  - Look out for an email from OLRH containing the survey & completion instructions
- How to Prepare:
  - Communicate importance of survey completion to LPH
  - Consider hosting survey completion sessions within your municipality, ISD unit, etc.
- Outcome:
  - Data will be aggregated to understand statewide capacity, estimate the cost of meeting standards, and inform future resources, training, and technical assistance
- Questions?
  - For questions on how to access the survey, please reach out to Christina Moore ([christina.moore3@mass.gov](mailto:christina.moore3@mass.gov))

## Performance Standards Survey

- Background:
  - This survey will collect current (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026) local capacity to meet Performance Standards.
  - The survey includes 5 domains and 24 topic areas
    - Domains: Administration, Environmental Health, Disease Control, Tobacco, FPHS
  - Each municipality will receive their own link and will complete **one** survey together
- Timeline:
  - The survey will be launched during the week of March 9th
  - OLRH will host a Performance Standards Survey special webinar on Tuesday, March 10th
- How to Prepare:

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- OLRH will send an email to each municipality or health district to confirm designated contacts for access to the Performance Standards survey
- Questions?
  - For questions, please reach out to [performancestandards@mass.gov](mailto:performancestandards@mass.gov)

## **B. Upcoming Training Opportunities**

### **a. Homing in on Hoarding**

February 17, 1-2pm (Virtual)

Dan Hasset, the trainer for the Berkshire-Hampden Public Health Training Hub, presents on hoarding. Learn about the housing code and regulations on hoarding, the signs and symptoms of hoarding disorder, strategies to support hoarders with empathy, and identify community resources that can help. Register by February 13.

### **b. Navigating the FDA Food Code (\$\$\$)**

February 17-19, 9am-5pm (Virtual)

NEHA's three-day virtual course is for industry professionals who want to learn how to save time and reduce stress by clarifying what inspectors look for, and avoid costly violations and strengthen day-to-day food safety practices.

### **c. Evolving Tools for Bed Bug Control: Technology, Treatment, and Sustainability**

February 17, 2-3pm (Virtual)

In this NEHA webinar, Dr. Aaron Ashbrook will explore the latest advances in bed bug control, including new insecticides, detection methods, and integrated management strategies. The presentation will highlight practical considerations for selecting and implementing these tools in real-world environments, from residential properties to commercial and public facilities.

### **d. Retail Tobacco Inspection Training**

February 20, 1-2:30pm (Virtual)

MHOA's Retail Tobacco Inspection training.

### **e. Educating Merchants: Training for Tobacco Inspectors**

February 24, 1-2:30pm (Virtual)

This training will provide guidance for distributing materials and resources to tobacco retailers, informing them of current fines for noncompliance, the importance of age verification, tips for refusing sales, and training opportunities for clerks on responsible sales practices.

### **f. Virtual Body Art Facility Inspector Training (\$\$\$)**

February 24 and 26, 12-4 pm (Virtual)

NEHA's virtual Body Art Facility Inspector Training focuses on the fundamentals of conducting a risk-based body art facility inspection. This virtual training takes place over two days.

### **g. MEHA Title 5 Seminar 2026 (Wastewater) (\$\$\$)**

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February 25 (In-Person; Taunton, MA)

MEHA's annual Title 5 Seminar brings septic industry experts and public health professionals together for a full day of in-person learning and networking. This year's seminar will feature presentations on the septic system approval process, I/A systems, climate change, new MassDEP training guidelines, and more.

**h. Extreme Heat 101**

March 3, 1pm-2pm (Virtual)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Bureau of Climate & Environmental Health and Division of Community Engagement discuss health impacts and causes of heat stress, who is at highest risk, HEAT initiatives and Unhealthy Heat, and state resources.

**i. Totally Title 5 (Wastewater) (\$\$\$)**

March 24, 8am-4pm (In-person; Holyoke, MA)

WMPHA presents the annual Totally Title 5 conference at the Log Cabin in Holyoke. Hear from industry experts, local public health, and MA DEP staff. Topics include Title 5 basics, private wells, Metrik, and more! Register by March 17.

**j. Massachusetts Title 5 Soil Evaluator Class (\$\$\$)**

April 7, 14, 23 (In-person; TBD location)

April 28 (In-person Exam; TBD location)

April 21, May 5, 12 (Field; TBD location)

May 27 (Field Exam; TBD location)

Registration is not yet open but mark your calendars. Seats fill up quickly, so NEIWPCC recommends you prepare your completed application and send it as soon as registration opens. See the attached flyer for more information.

**k. 2026 MassDEP/MHOA Seminar: [Click Here to Register](#)**

Registration is now open for the 2026 MassDEP/MHOA Seminar!

Dates:

**Wednesday March 4, 2026** - Virtual Day 1 (Part 1 of 2)

**Thursday March 5, 2026** - Cyprian Keyes, Boylston

**Wednesday, March 11, 2026** - Virtual Day 2 (Part 2 of 2)

**Tuesday, March 17, 2026** - Delaney House, Holyoke

**This is a one-day training, repeated in 3 ways.** Two in person options (Holyoke and Boylston) and one virtual day, split into two parts.

## IV. NEPHA Updates

- A. **Term 2 Check In with Patrick Henry:** The Term 2 check-in with NEPHA's program coordinator, Patrick Henry, is scheduled for next week, Thursday, February 19th, at 8:00 AM. Chassea Robinson, the group's dedicated regional UMass Public Health Nurse Consultant, will also be attending the check-in to observe, answer questions, and brainstorm as needed, as noted by Patrick Henry. The meeting invitation will be sent by Manizeh Afridi to the rest of the coalition so they can join the discussion if interested.
- B. **Regional Inspector Hiring Updates:** The group reviewed recent hiring activity for the inspector position. Over the past month, two panel interviews were conducted with strong candidates, two new applications were received, and one additional phone screening was completed this week. The current applicant pool includes a mix of recent graduates and experienced inspectors. The group also reviewed key budget considerations, including a current line item of \$93,500, an estimated salary of up to \$75,000 for a 1.0 FTE, and the fact that the position is grant-funded with potential funding uncertainty after FY27.

### Next Steps:

The group agreed to move forward with a panel interview for the most recent candidate with inspectional experience and then determine which candidate to invite for an in-person interview. The group will also begin discussing how to utilize any unspent funds.

- C. **Regional Public Health Nurse Updates - Highlights from Ashley Pavlakos:**  
Ashley Pavlakos shared updates from the past month, including securing a GLHA mini grant to support the upcoming Community Baby Shower. She coordinated the Tewksbury Senior Center April Health Fair, co-coordinated the Tewksbury High School Wellness Fair, and arranged a Drug Story Theater performance at the high school. She also continued outreach for the Maternal Health Event, hosted a cholesterol clinic for residents, and conducted multiple flu clinics, including home-visit vaccinations in Tewksbury and Tyngsborough.
- D. **Regional Public Health Specialist Updates - Highlights from Bethany Slack:**  
Bethany Slack shared highlights from her first two months with the coalition. She met with health department staff in Chelmsford, Tewksbury, and Tyngsborough to discuss ways to support local public health programming. She also contributed to planning for the Maternal and Child Health event by creating a donation poster, building the vendor outreach spreadsheet, and conducting vendor outreach.

Bethany identified and interviewed key stakeholders outside the health departments in Tewksbury and Tyngsborough, including the Tyngsborough Library Director, outreach staff from the Tyngsborough Center for Active Living, and the Tewksbury Council on Aging

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outreach coordinator. Through these conversations, she identified several potential collaboration opportunities, including work with the Opioid Task Force, support for a Mill City Grows food access partnership, and the development of an updated resource for residents experiencing homelessness.

As a next step, the group discussed submitting an application for the DPH Local Public Health Internship opportunity to support this work. The proposed internship project would focus on developing a NEPHA Community Resource Coordination Guide, a practical, easy-to-use tool that outlines how to support someone experiencing specific needs, such as housing instability, food insecurity, mental health concerns, or maternal and child health needs. The guide would include step-by-step coordination pathways, key contacts, and decision points to help staff and community partners respond effectively and consistently.

## V. Community Updates

- **Billerica:** Planning has begun for the Billerica Health and Wellness Fair.
- **Chelmsford:** Darcy Beall and Taryn Angel presented their latest work in Chelmsford, which includes the development of a new training workshop focusing on Hoarding Disorders. This training is an adaptation of the "Buried in Treasures" program, tailored to better serve the specific needs of their community members.
- **Tewksbury:** Drug Story Theater performance at the Tewksbury high school.
- **Tyngsborough:** The Tyngsborough Library is set to install a "meeting pod," which will serve as a dedicated and private on-site space designed to provide confidential access to social services for community members. This initiative aims to reduce barriers for vulnerable community members by allowing licensed social workers, community health workers, or resource coordinators to offer support services, including mental health care, housing assistance, benefits enrollment, and substance use support at the library.

## VI. Adjournment

The next regular coalition meeting will be held on Thursday, March 12th, from 11AM-1PM in Tyngsborough, with a virtual option available for those with conflicts.

### Motion to adjourn the meeting

Donna Greenwood motioned to adjourn the meeting. Kristel Bennett seconded the motion.

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Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: Y

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:45PM.

**Documents used by the public body during the meeting:**

- NEPHA February 12th Meeting Slides
- Proposal for Local Public Health Internship Program